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THE DUVAL SERIES

by George H. Cordier

Not the least interesting of the many series published in the days of Dime Novel glory, was The Claude Duval Series, which first appeared in England, and then was republished in this country. First by the Robert M. De Witt Publishing Co., and then in the very early numbers of the Wide Awake Library. The date of the first appearance of the series in the United States as published by the De Witt Co. was 1860. Then, exactly eighteen years later, in 1878, it was reissued by the Tousey Pub. Co. in the very first number of the above mentioned library. The Series was highly popular, and deservedly so, by reason of its charm of style and the highly interesting, not to say sensational nature of the contents of its many volumes. Before he goes any further the writer will give a list of the entire Series, which will convey some idea of the thrilling and picturesque character of the many incidents that give life and color to the narrative of the exploits of the dashing highwayman—Claude Duval.

- 1 Gentleman Jack
- 2 Jack and His Bride
- 3 Dare Devil Dick
- 4 Grace Manning
- 5 Renegade Gipsy
- 6 Highwayman's Stratagem
- 7 Ride For Life
- 8 Claude's Last Battle

- 9 Black Bess
- 10 Claude In His Dungeon
- 11 Struggle For Life
- 12 Claude In a Convent
- 13 Claude and the Abbess
- 14 Duval and the Duchess
- 15 Claude to the Rescue
- 16 Death to the Traitor
- 17 Duval in Newgate
- 18 Highwayman's Bride
- 19 Rosa Bell
- 20 Duval in a Duel
- 21 Lucy Thornton
- 22 Claude Captured
- 23 The Cask of Gold
- 24 Moonlight Jack
- 25 Duval Denounced
- 26 Claude in the Cave
- 27 Luke the Lurker
- 28 Duval at Bay

We will now proceed to give some account of Duval the original, the time in which he lived, and the daring nature of his deeds. Duval was born in France but early in life removed to England where he soon acquired a great reputation by reason of his bold and dashing character, and his claim to being a gentleman, notwithstanding his real status as an outlaw at war with society, with a price set upon his head. Those who have perused the domestic annals of England from the time of Charles the Second, to the early years of the fourth George must have had their attention very often called to the frequency of highway robberies on all

the main roads of the country. Claude Duval by the boldness of his acts and the rapidity of his movements, became preeminently a terror to travelers and a plague to the police. Nearly every diary or letter from London at the time, is full of the wonderful exploits and marvelous escapes of the dashing Duval. Every class of people from King to beggar took a decided interest in the sayings and doings of the daring highwayman. Mounted upon a steed of marvelous swiftness—the beautiful Black Bess—he outran all pursuers, and when he grew careless, and was captured, no jail could hold him. He broke chains and scaled walls as though he had the strength of a giant and the lightness of an eagle together in his single person. To illustrate the audacity of the man, the story is told of his stopping the carriage of a wealthy and powerful nobleman, and while his gang pillaged the coach of the exalted personage Duval compelled the knights lady to descend from the coach and dance a minuet with him. The scene has been depicted by a celebrated English artist in a highly dramatic and powerful picture.

From the foregoing account it will be seen that the Claude Duval series is by no means all fiction, but it is founded on facts. The author of the series evidently knew what he was writing about, and must have been well acquainted with the English criminal records of the time, to be able to write in such a highly absorbing and interesting manner. The writer regrets that he has only five of the Series, as he has admired it for over sixty years, ever since the time when, as a little boy, he looked into the newsdealers window and saw the bright yellow covers and the old time crude illustrations that distinguished the series, as issued by the De Witt Co. He also vividly remembers having two or three numbers of the Tousey Co. editions as published in the Wide Awake Library. The writer feels that he will be forgiven if he gives an extract from one of the numbers in his collection, entitled "Duval De-nounced; or, The Haunted Mansion." Duval and his wife May, and his faithful friend Luke, fleeing from the officers of the law comes upon an isolated mansion standing alone surrounded by wide fields. They enter the mansion to take refuge from a

coming storm; and in one of the rooms find a little child in a drugged sleep. They rescued the child and pass the night in the haunted house where spirit forms appear, and disclose that a horrible murder had been committed in the desolate dwelling. The next morning they meet with the following adventure.

"Hush!" cried Luke, who had gone right out on the landing of the stair case while May and Claude had been talking together. "Hush! Did you hear that?"

"What What?" said May and Claude together, as they rushed to the side of Luke.

Luke held up his hand as a signal to be still, and then a strange sound came to their ears—so strange, and so completely inexplicable that they looked at each other in mute wonder and amazement until it was over. In order to comprehend what it was that gave a strange and a startling significance to this sound, we must state that these three persons stood opposite to a stair case of considerable width that wound down in one direction to the lower part of the mansion, and up on the other where it decreased in width, to some apartments which could only be in some turrets at the top-most portion of the building. Now through a stained glass window, at a considerable height there came, notwithstanding the dimness caused by the rain, quite light enough to enable the whole of the staircase to be seen without any sort of difficulty whatever; and as they all listened, they distinctly heard a footstep coming up the stairs slowly and distinctly, step by step. But they saw no one.

On came the footsteps—the completely invisible footsteps—and yet so distinctly heard that a mistake was out of the question, till it reached the very landing on which they all stood.

So firm was the opinion on their minds that there was something, or somebody, ascending the stairs, that they one and all involuntarily recoiled as it reached the top step, and then it seemed, with a gliding sort of scraping sound, along the floor to pass them and commence the ascent of the upper flight of stairs. But nothing could they see! Not a shadow—not the slightest movement of the air—not the dimmest alteration of the strange checkered light that came in

from the stained glass window could they detect; and yet there was the sound.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! Up the stairs. No wonder that even Claude Duval drew a long breath, and glared in the face of Luke with something like terror.

No wonder that May felt faint and sick at the thought that after all, there might something more even in the fearful visions of the night that had assailed her in the old house, than she had believed to think before was possible. No wonder that Luke even with all his courage, felt his very heart shrink within him at this strange new preception of the supernatural. The child trembled and hid her face. Slowly the footsteps went on up the stairs, and was evidently each moment getting fainter, when, as if by some desperate resolve, Claude Duval stepped aside, and called out—"Pause yet a moment! If ye be one of the supernatural world I will not fear you; but I ask and command you as one of Gods creatures like ourselves to speak to me." The sound of footsteps suddenly ceased, and now all was still. Duvals friends beg him not to follow the invisible presence, but he was determined to do so.

With these words Claude Duval made a bound toward the upper staircase, and ascended several of the steps, and then called out, "If I understand you rightly, invisible being, that it is your wish that I should follow I will do so. If I am wrong adopt some mode to let me know." Duval ascended yet another step but scarcely had he done so when a peal of the most horrible and unearthly laughter that it is possible for the mind of man to conceive, came from the upper part of the stairs, and with shrieking vehemence echoed over the whole place. Claude Duval recoiled as if he had been shot, and step by step he shrunk back until he got right against the wall close by the door of the room they had all just left. "No, No," he gasped. "This is too terrible—much too terrible, I will not follow."

Claude and his friends have more weird and wonderful adventures in the mansion. And the sights they saw, and the discoveries they made, gave proof that the old mansion was indeed a house of horrors inhabited by beings of another world who had

certainly made it their own. The above extract from the volume of the Duval Series No. 25 will give some idea of the startling nature of the many adventures of Claude Duval and his friends, as told in the Duval Series. In disguise he mingled with the highest of Englands nobility everywhere being admired for his handsome person, and his charming and aristocratic manners. On the other hand he was in touch with the most desperate and daring of the criminal classes that then infested the city of London led by the notorious Jonathan Wild. Jonathan Wild had a complete organization of robbers, murderers and the worst of criminal element, and most of the crimes committed in London at that time could be traced to this criminal fraternity. Two of the bloody members of this foul gang, Sweeney Todd the Ruffian Barber, and Blueskin were noted above others for the horrible nature of the crimes committed by them, which the reader would hardly believe possible were they not told in the criminal records of London. Duval had other noted highwaymen to share his glory, of which Dick Turpin was the most prominent. Then there was Captain Macheast—the hero of the celebrated Beggars Opera—Sixteen String Jack, and Tom King, the gentleman highwayman.

Claude and his friends had many other strange adventures besides the one of the haunted mansion, before the end came, but come it did at last, and in a most unsatisfactory and disappointing manner. One would think that after writing such fascinating and highly sensational stories, and displaying such ingenuity and great imagination the author of the series would bring it to a close in a most highly dramatic and thrilling manner. But no. The last chapter of the series states that Claude and Luke were captured and suffered for their crimes, and that May escaped to France and died of a broken heart.

Aside from the last chapter, the remainder of the Series as we have stated, is most readable and thrillingly interesting

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Carl Linville of Cincinnati says to

tell the fellows in Newsy News that he appreciates their co-operation.

Was asked a short time ago, why we didn't use commemorative stamps on all our correspondence, it would be a grand idea, but an expensive and bothersome one for some of the members, but of course it would help a collector, and those that didn't collect them, they could exchange them with stamp collectors for novels or something.

Col. Charles D. Randolph sends us his NEW address as follows: 2025 Belle Ave., Davenport, Iowa. He's living on the highest point in the city, and likes it.

At one time, Wm. J. Benners published "The Constance Library," in 1895 to be exact. It is believed he had an old friend by the name of Constance Collins, sister to Mrs. E. Burke Collins, a Lupton Publishing Co., contributor. As he was very fond of Constance, we are wondering if that is where "The Constance Library" received its name?

There's "A Dime Novel Story," in Vol. 4, No. 33, of Golden Days.

I see they're not printing Crime Detective, Crime Confessions, Real Detective, Headquarters Detective and Sensation Magazine any more. A lot of the magazines have bit the dust in the last year or so.

Beadles Half Dime Library #1090, June 1899 published by M. J. Ivers & Co., 379 Pearl St., N. Y., title Jubilee Joe, the Chain-Lightning Detective, was written by nine authors, such as Chapter 1, J. C. Cowdrick, Chap. 2 and 3 Ed. L. Wheeler, Chap. 4 Chas. Morris, Chap. 5 Major E. L. St. Vrain, Chap. 6, Charles Morris, Chap. 7 and 8, Frank Dumont, Chap. 9, Capt. Mark Wilton, Chap. 10, J. C. Cowdrick, Chap. 11 Capt. Mark Wilton, Chap. 12 and 13 Wm. E. Eyster, Chap. 14, T. C. Harbaugh, Chap. 15 Detective Douglas.

Paul E. Mason of Danville, N. Y., says he was pleased to get a copy of Roundup with the article by Joe Gantner on Old Circuses and Weeklies, and enjoyed it very much. He says that back in June 22, 1911, the greatest day he ever saw was when the great John Robinson Ten Big Shows played there. Paul likes old novels that have stories in them about the circus.

C. Arthur Neetz, the Publisher of the All Adventure Library back in

the early 1930's was here the evening of June 8th, also a friend by the name of Munroe. Can't think of his first name now. Art is now collecting Liberty Boys of 76, his old favorite.

David C. Adams letter continued from last month: One of the most treasured experiences of the past few months, came from receiving several letters from Gilbert Patten, the "Burt L. Standish," who created and wrote those famous stories about my college heroes, Frank and Dick Merriwell. Before me now is an autographed photo of Mr. Patten, which I prize and will always keep in my den, above a collection of his bound books and an unfinished collection of the paper backs containing his works, and that justly popular "Tip Top Weekly." There is a very good possibility that Frank Merriwell will come to us in the near future, through the medium of an electrical transcription over the radio, but the author says negotiations have not yet been completed. In my opinion, a radio series of new stories dealing with the clean adventures of Frank Merriwell would be popular on the air, and while most of the youngsters nowadays seem to have found more modern heroes, and become "Supermaniacs," I am confident they would recognize the sterling worth of such a character as Frank, whose fairness and virtue in athletics and every phase of life, can never become old-fashioned. No criticism of the fine, modern youth of today is intended. (To be continued in our next.)

Watch for more of the fine newsy chats from George S. Barton soon.

George spent the morning visiting Charlie Bragin a year ago in May 31, 1943.

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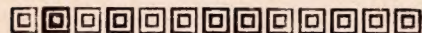
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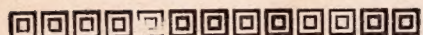
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